

# Gray Mullet - 'Ama`ama

## *Mugilidae*



Habitat: This type of fish lives in all kinds of waters from salt to fresh to brackish.

Description: The young are silver, and the adults (anae) have large scales with a gray upper body, a white underside, and a tinge of red around the lips and gills. 'Ama`ama can grow to about 2.5 feet.

Cultural Significance: This fish was considered a "pua`a fish" meaning that in certain ceremonies the fish could be substituted for a pig because of its choice characteristics.

Importance: The 'ama`ama was very important to Hawaiians. They would catch the fish along the shore, then fatten them in their ponds so that they had a reliable food source. They're a choice fish because they provided delicious meat with few bones.

# Grass Carp

## *Ctenopharyngodon idella*

### Description:

Grass carp have bronze bodies, white underbellies, olive-brown fins, and small eyes.



[http://www.hookhack.com/html/fom080113\\_grasscarp.html](http://www.hookhack.com/html/fom080113_grasscarp.html)

**Habitat:** This type of fish likes to dwell in calm, shallow, fresh or brackish streams and ponds.

**Diet:** Grass carp are a herbivorous type of fish. They like to eat limu and other grasses in their waters. In Kionakapahu, a fishpond in Keaukaha, the grass carps eat a lot of California grass.

**Importance:** These fishes can be used for food. They also are used to control vegetation in ponds.

**Cultural Information:** Grass carps were introduced to Hawai'i around 1968.

# Hawaiian Flagtail - Aholehole

## *Kuhlia sandvicensis*



Photo by J.E. Randall

Description: This fish has transparent-like skin that fades from silvery gray to white (dorsal fin to underbelly).

They can grow up to 10 inches.

Habitat: The young fishes swarm in shallow shores, and the adult fish are usually found around coral and rock caves or in reef-like salt, fresh, or brackish waters.

Name: Hole in  
aholehole means "to strip away", so when it was used in sacrifice the fish would let the evil be striped away. Aholehole in whole means "sparkling", which describes its sparkling appearance.

Cultural Significance: Aholehole were and are a food source. In ancient Hawaii the fish were considered a delicacy and often craved by chiefs. The aholehole was also used as a sacrifice to keep evil spirits away or to ward off evil influences during times of construction.

# Tilapia – Talapia

## *Sarotherodon melanotheron*

Description: Talapia have a darkish gray-blue body, a wide mouth, and fat, full lips.

Habitat: These fish prefer fresh water, but also dwell in brackish waters. They are an invasive species here in Hawai'i.

Diet: Talapia eat a wide range of things. They eat a variety of plants such as duckweed (if around), submerged foliage, and all kinds of limu. They consume many of the plants that most fish don't go for.



Other information: These fish were introduced to Hawai'i to be bait for other fishes such as ahi (tuna). Unfortunately once talapia are introduced or migrate to another area such as a pond, they can quickly populate and have the power to outcompete native fish.

# ‘O‘opu nākea *Awaous stamineus*

Description: This type of ‘o‘opu is of a dark olive color with white streaks and can grow up to 13 inches.



Photo by Bryan Harry

Habitat: ‘O‘opu nākea mainly live in low fresh and brackish water streams and ponds because they can't climb steep walls like other ‘o‘opu. They like to burrow themselves under cave like rock structures.

Cultural significance:  
Freshwater ‘o‘opu, such as the nākea, were a delicacy because they were known to eat the lehua that fell into the streams.

Diet: This type of fish feeds mainly on limu, but also eats small insects and their larvae.

Name: This type of ‘o‘opu is called nākea because nākea means “the white” which describes the unique white patterns that cover the ‘o‘opu’s dark body.



# 'O'opu naniha

## *Stenogobius hawaiiensis*



Habitat: They mainly live in fresh or brackish water streams and ponds and dwell near the edges of their enclosure (where the water is calm). They are known to avoid commotion and quickly jet away from it.

Description: The 'o'opu naniha has a body in the hue of light olive-brown with dark brown markings on the upper body. They can grow up to 5 inches.

Diet: This fish eats mosses, limu, and leaves and other foliage drowned in the surrounding water.

Name: This type of 'o'opu is called naniha because "niha" means "cross" which may describe the fish's distinctive lines near its eye.

Cultural significance: 'O'opu are endemic to Hawai'i, meaning that they are found nowhere other than here. This type of 'o'opu wasn't and isn't often consumed by humans.

# 'O'opu akupa

## *Eleotris sandwichensis*



[http://www.bishopmuseum.org/research/natsci/waipiostudy/students/meet\\_the\\_critters/fish/native/Eleotris\\_sandwichensis.htm](http://www.bishopmuseum.org/research/natsci/waipiostudy/students/meet_the_critters/fish/native/Eleotris_sandwichensis.htm)

**Description:** The 'o'opu akupa has a very dark brown/black color, but a light brown belly and dark fins. They usually grow up to nine inches in length.

**Habitat:** This type of fish usually dwells around/in underwater rock and or coral cave-like structures. They also hang in the mud of shallow brackish water ponds and streams.

**Diet:** Like other 'o'opu the akupa also consumes limu as its main food source.

**Fun Fact:** This type of 'o'opu is known to make bubbles in the water of their habitats.

**Name:** This type of 'o'opu has many names (okuhe, owau, etc.), but akupa is one of the most common.

**Cultural significance:** The 'o'opu spawn (hinana) were a delicacy, which the natives of Waimea and Kaua'i were very fond of (they rarely shared the precious fish with others).